

Feb.  
1978

Shevat/Adar  
5738

**SHA'AR ZAHAV**

# FORWARD

**marty**

**allen**

**joseph**



*The Trio*





# REVIEW

## JEWISH GRANDMOTHERS

edited by

Jenny Mauser &

Sydelle Kramer

JEWISH GRANDMOTHERS, edited by  
Jenny Mauser and Sydelle Kramer.  
\$3.95, Beacon-Harper Row, paperbk.

Jewish grandmothers, something most of  
us will never be but almost all of us have.  
I want to write about this book now, in the  
season when we travel or visit our families.  
I think it is good for sharing and gift  
giving because it is light reading yet  
relates to many Jewish lives.

For us, as Jewish Lesbians, it is  
important to find acceptable connections  
with our Jewish past even though it is  
heterosexist and nuclear family oriented.  
We find that connection in JEWISH GRAND-  
MOTHERS, accounts of ten Jewish women in  
their seventies and eighties. Just as  
important is that by sharing this book with  
our sisters and mothers and sisters-in-law  
we have a way to stay connected in the  
present with the women in our families. It  
just occurs to me that immigrant women who  
felt they had found a better and more modern  
life in America may have felt estranged from  
their families in Europe in the same way as  
gay people who have to leave behind parts of  
their straight family life.

The book is subtitled "A Vibrant  
Generation of Women" and from it we learn  
that ours is not the only generation to  
struggle and rebel. The material is

Talking about books is one of my  
favorite conversations. I hope to share  
information about books I've read in  
future issues of the newsletter and I  
hope other people will contribute write  
ups about their own reading.

I have been reading Lesbian and  
Feminist material for almost six years  
but I have just started on specifically  
Jewish reading. Most of the books I  
mention here are available at the two  
women's bookstores I frequent (in San  
Francisco: Old Wives' Tales, 532  
Valencia and in the East Bay: A Woman's  
Place, 5251 Broadway at College in  
Oakland). I don't know about their  
availability in Jewish bookstores.

drawn from taped interviews with women who  
immigrated in the first quarter of this  
century from Eastern Europe to the USA and  
settled in Chicago. The editors remind us  
that those who were likely to make the migra-  
tion were the most determined and resourceful  
and each story is full of action and feats  
of endurance.

I was most amazed to read that some of  
the women were only twelve or fifteen years  
old when they traveled alone, away from their  
Russian and Polish villages, moved for months  
through Europe and then spent weeks in the  
reeking belly of a ship to cross the ocean.

The desire for formal education was a  
driving force for almost all of them. Public  
schools in Russia allowed only one per cent  
of their places to Jews so leaving would  
have been imperative to most of these young  
women even if they had not been faced with  
the horror of pogroms.

When I started reading it seemed that  
each woman had been forced down the usual  
anti-achievement path, had, as one grand-  
mother said, "had plans or dreams but then  
came the children."

But, as I read more carefully I noted  
that all of them worked outside of home  
before, during or after their marriages and  
indeed that Jewish women were expected to  
work at least before marriage. Many of these  
women were married more than once and some  
were daring enough to initiate divorces in a  
era when their sisters in the Old Country  
were still subjected to arranged marriages  
and endless pregnancies.

For me the most important part of the  
book was women talking about their present  
lives. I have had some mild interest and a  
reading knowledge of the immigrant experience  
but it is only now, as I reach my mid-thirties  
that I am suddenly beginning to need to know  
how women feel about themselves and aging.

I admire the centeredness and clarity  
of very old women yet there is certainly no  
sameness based on age. Each Jewish grand-  
mother is clearly on very different terms  
with her life. Pearl Moscovitz feels "No,  
I didn't accomplish what I wanted. Because

contd.



1-N



I wanted an education. I took it the way it is and that's the way its going to be."

T Sarah Rothman earned a living as a watchmaker and summed up her life story with "I tried everything. I was fighting for my existence. Believe me---I'm thinking of it many times. I must be strong. My grand-children don't know what I went through."

Ida Richter offers the most hope for ever arriving at some clear answers. "I was like in a daze, looking at things and not having my own ideas and waiting for somebody to tell me. I know now. I know what's all about."

We think our lives have gone through great changes as we've moved from the East Coast to California and as we've come out to ourselves and the world. But the leaps made by immigrant Jewish women seem almost incredible. It makes me wonder how we will look back on our own lives.

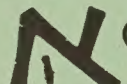
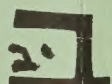
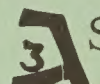
Most of these women started from scratch at least twice in their lives, once when they came to America and then again after the Depression. They have a lot of knowledge we did not have growing up. They were experts at survival long before we even learned the term.

Although my own grandmothers grew up comfortably in Chicago, I understand my strength as an independent and resourceful woman as a heritage from my immigrant foremothers.

How many of them would have preferred to stay single and live as Lesbians? Why are there so many Jewish women in the Womens Movement? JEWISH GRANDMOTHERS hints at the answers. Our options are different but our strengths and characteristics are very much the same.

---Emily Rosenberg

## ✓Report

In January's "Forward" the three Structural Plans were authored by  Gerry  Rob  Susan Toe-dah! (thanks)

The following structure has been adopted by Sha'ar Zahav (in part and for a 6 month trial period.) Full review in March issue.

Elected offices: 2 Co-leaders, Archivist/Recorder, Treasurer

Committees: 1) Service/Liturgy/Worship 2) Oneg-food & setup  
3) Education/Cultural 4) Outreach 5) Funding  
6) Building search 7) Newsletter

"SIGN UP SHEETS FOR THESE COMMITTEES WILL BE AT SHABAT SERVICES!" NOW WE WORK AND CREATE!!!

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### "THE CREATURE FROM FULLERTON"

Senator John Briggs is on the march again, with his Anti-Gay petitions.

"The Bay Area Coalition against the Briggs Initiative" - (BACABI) has organized our Religious Concerns Comm. to assist in the fight against his hate-filled campaign. The Committee will meet THURS. night FEB. 9th, 1978 at 7:30 p.m. on the 3rd. Floor of the MCC. 23rd. & CAPP (1 blk. E. of Mission, near 24th St. Bart Station. -----Please Come, Your Help is Needed!



I'm sure many of us will be heading on down to L.A. (Beth Chayim Chadashim) for the Third International Conference of Gay Jews May 19th thru the 21st. (see enclosed flyer)  
LAUREN (tel. 421-2930 afternoons, 863-4939 anytime) will handle any and all arrangements, singly, and in groups, whether by plane or bus etc. This is going to be an exceptional experience both for ourselves and to share with so many of our "family"

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SERVICES ON SHABBAT START PROMPTLY AT 7:30 (no Jewish Standard Time JST) come at 7:00

### CALENDAR

Friday

Feb. 3- Folk Dance with Mordechai

Feb. 10- Election of Co-leaders, Archivist/Recorder, Treasurer before services.

Feb. 17- Services Committee Business

Feb. 24- Services result of committee chairperson elections

March- Services- General Business Meeting

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WE WILL BE ATTENDING "CRIMES AGAINST NATURE"

sunday FEBRUARY 12th ABE LINCOLN's Birthday. Cost\$\$\$\$\$ only \$3.00 may we suggest a small donation with the price of the ticket? Send your check to our address the bottom of this page. see you there!

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"Immerse yourself in the many moods of Hasidic melody(niggun) discover the freedom of voice & movement within..."

Info. & Regis. write or phone

tel. # 526-2354 Jacob Picheny  
1932 Los Angeles  
Berkeley, Ca. 94707

"SONG OPENS A WINDOW TO THE SECRET PLACES OF THE SOUL"

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For decades Arabs refused to allow a Palestinian state on the west bank of the Jordan. It makes them furious to see Israel doing the same.

**SHA'AR ZAHAV**

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